



The President's Daily Brief

17 July 1970

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The situation in Cambodia is discussed on *Page 1*.

In Laos, the Communists are engaging government forces to prevent them from harassing the flow of their men and material to Cambodia and South Vietnam. (*Page 2*)

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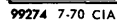
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The unexpected reconstitution without change of the Soviet government is examined on *Page 5*.

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CAMBODIA

There are unconfirmed press reports that Kirirom has been retaken. At least eight government battalions participated in the assault. For the first time since the outbreak of hostilities, Phnom Penh has admitted that in this operation government forces have suffered "fairly heavy casualties."

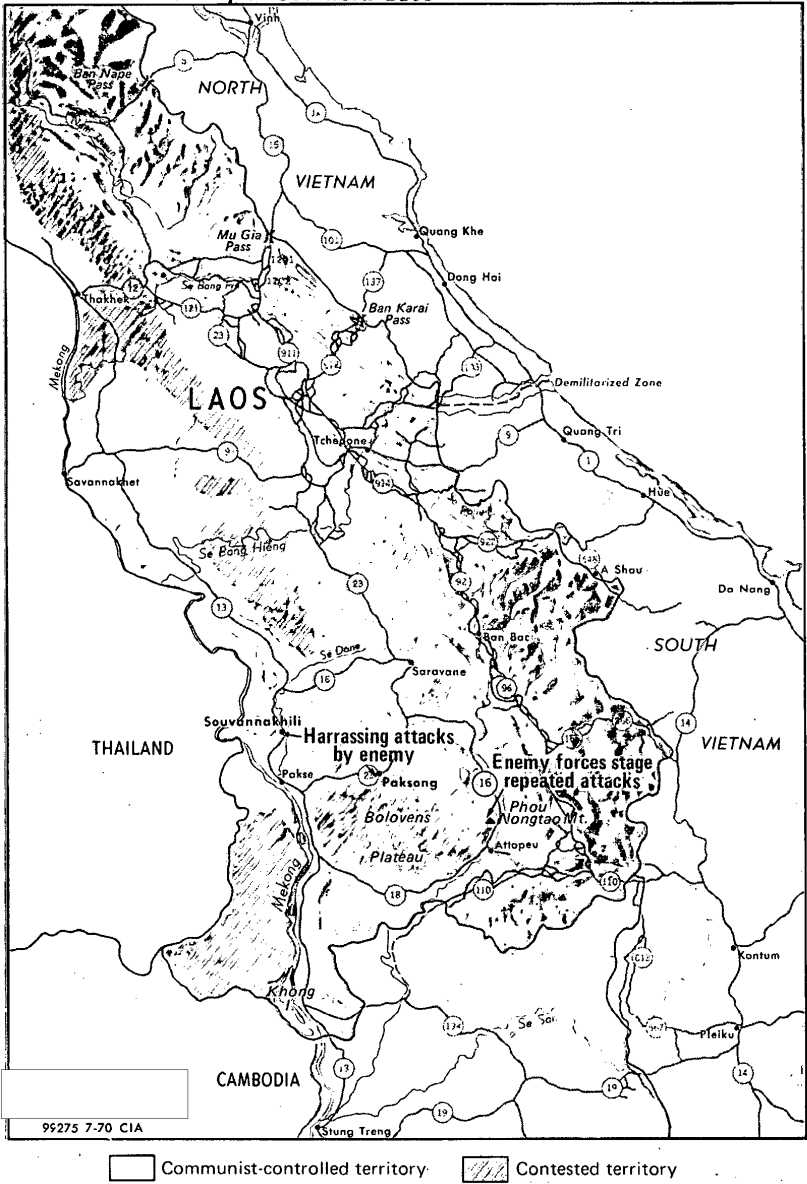
The Communists made a minor attack on the Lovek ordnance depot on the night of 15-16 July, but were repulsed. Government forces, aided by air strikes, appear to be in control of this situation.

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Foreign Minister Koun Wick told Chargé Rives yesterday that the government is opposed to a formal regional defense pact because it would jeopardize Cambodia's standing as a neutral. He implied, however, that the government might not rule out informal military alignment as long as Communist forces threaten the country. These matters probably will be discussed during Thieu's visit to Cambodia today and during Lon Nol's visit to Bangkok next week.

This will come as no surprise to Thieu, who recently told Ambassador Bunker that he saw "no possibility" that a formal defense pact would be concluded. Expressing doubt that Cambodia or Laos would ever agree to an alliance, Thieu emphasized that the important thing was to get on with helping the Cambodians.

Communist Activity in Southern Laos



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LAOS

For the past four days, enemy forces have staged repeated attacks on a government battalion which recently moved into the Phou Nongtao mountain area along the eastern edge of the Bolovens Plateau. At last report, the irregular unit had been forced to withdraw from its main position, but was remaining in the area.

Communist pressure against government bases on the Bolovens is probably intended to forestall interdiction operations into the infiltration corridor, which have been on the increase. Since 22 June, government guerrilla teams are reported to have accounted for four trucks and 25 watercraft along Route 16 and the Se Kong River.

To the west of the plateau, Communist forces appear to be trying to prevent government forces from regaining the initiative during the rainy season. Harassing attacks have been directed against Paksong and Souvannakhili, and since 13 July small unit actions have been reported from the area just north of Khong Island.

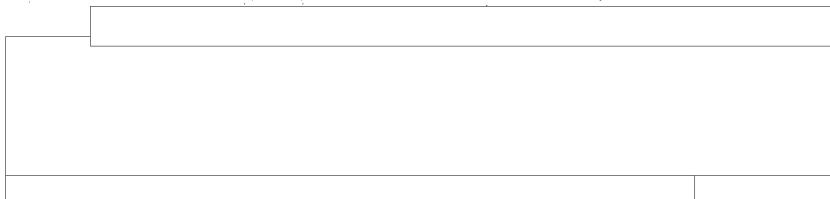
All of these places have been earmarked in enemy propaganda for Communist seizure during the rainy season. The Communists' actions so far, however, suggest that they are less interested in occupying towns than they are in tying down government troops while the flow of men and material to Cambodia and South Vietnam continues.

In the north, heavy rains have brought military operations to a virtual standstill.

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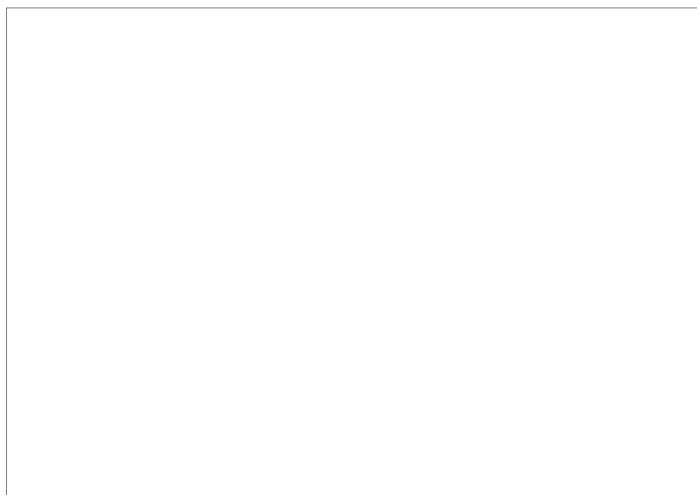
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EGYPT-ISRAEL

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USSR

After months of reports that Kosygin would resign and that there would be other important changes in the government, the Supreme Soviet met, Kosygin accepted the premiership again, and all 93 of his ministers were reappointed.

There is no hard information on the reasons for this development, or indeed on the postponement of the Soviet party congress which preceded it. There are several possibilities, which taken singly or together may help to explain what happened.

Kosygin himself said in early June that he would be free of ministerial cares in "a few weeks."

It is possible that Kosygin merely changed his mind.

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On the other hand, there may be an unresolved struggle for Kosygin's job: As has happened in the past, rumors of impending changes may have been floated to promote the fortunes of individual leaders. Thus, at least some of the reports this year concerning Kosygin's retirement may have been launched to undermine his position or that of his proteges.

The embassy in Moscow suggests that the reconstitution of the government is intrinsically connected to the party congress, and that the question of resource allocations has so divided the Soviet leadership that postponement of difficult decisions even in the government seemed the wisest choice. There is logic to this conclusion, for the direction of economic management and the selection of a successor for Kosygin are a part of the problem. It may be that we will not see significant changes until such decisions are made.

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NOTES

South Vietnam: More Communist main force units have re-established themselves in their border sanctuaries. The Viet Cong 5th Division headquarters recently shifted southward from Cambodia to within less than five miles from the Bu Dop Special Forces Camp in northwestern Phuoc Long Province (see Cambodian Situation map). The division's 174th Regiment may be en route to join it. Farther north, at least five subordinates of the Communist B-3 Front (the enemy's command headquarters for operations in the Vietnamese highlands) have returned to their normal base areas from refuge in northeastern Cambodia.

NATO-SALT: Our European NATO allies are concerned about US proposals for a limited initial SALT agreement because it would do nothing about Soviet intermediate- and medium-range missiles targeted against them. Secretary General Brosio, with the support of the French, the Belgians, and the Dutch, asked for more time to consider the proposal before it is presented to the Soviets. However, West Germany and the United Kingdom are opposed to lengthy consideration which might unduly delay the talks in Vienna.

Cuba:

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Peru-USSR: The Soviet relief airlift is not turning out to be the propaganda bonanza its authors may have hoped for. One reason, of course, is the delay in getting the flights under way. But the Peruvians themselves seem deliberately to be down-playing the relief effort. The first flight was met Tuesday only by two Peruvian Air Force colonels and a representative of the presidential emergency center. The public, too, seems to be taking the relief flights with a grain of salt; our embassy in Lima comments that the public reaction so far indicates that Peruvians view the Soviet aid as a grandstand play undertaken for political gains.

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